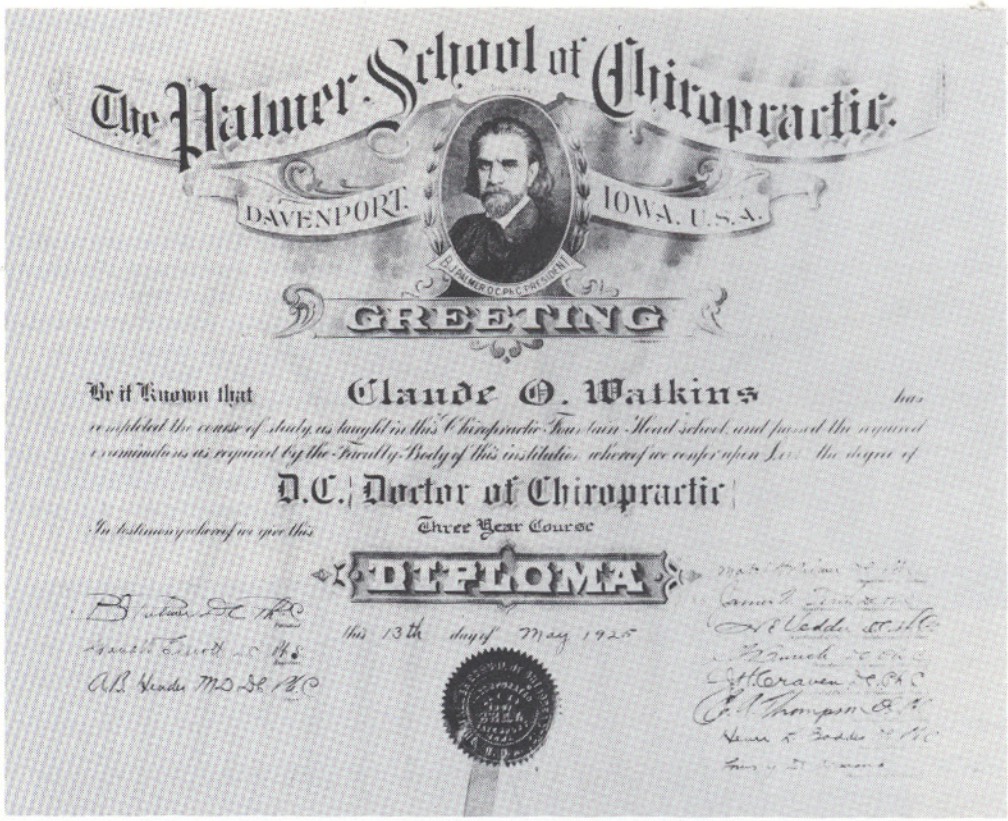

The Palmer School of Chiropractic

DAVENPORT, IOWA, U.S.A.

GREETING

Be it Known that Claude O. Watkins has

completed the course of study as taught in this Chiropractic Training School and passed the required examinations as required by the Faculty Body of this institution, whereof we confer upon [illegible] the degree of

D.C. Doctor of Chiropractic

In testimony whereof we give this Three Year Course

DIPLOMA

this 13th day of May 1925

Claude A. Watkins (1902-77), a Montana chiropractor who fought a largely unheeded crusade within the profession to elevate scientific clinical research, was a graduate of the PSC in 1922. Watkins (right, circa 1925) was recognized on the cover of the old NCA *Journal* in 1940. In June, at the AHC's Seventh Annual Conference at Northwestern College, Mrs. Watkins received a posthumous honorary degree for her late husband from NWCC President Cassata.

Claude O. Watkins: Pioneer Advocate for Clinical Scientific Chiropractic

JOSEPH C. KEATING, Ph.D.*

Fifty years ago a Palmer graduate (Class of '25) from Montana rose to a position of influence in the National Chiropractic Association. Dr. Claude O. Watkins was the author of more than three dozen published papers, many of which focused on the role of scientific research in chiropractic. An advocate for stronger educational standards, for freedom of speech and of inquiry, of clinical experimentation, and for a quantitative data-base to guide the clinical art of chiropractic, his message was largely ignored, misunderstood, or unknown to most chiropractors. This paper provides a brief personal biography, reference to Watkins' essays, and an analysis of Watkins' philosophy and predictions. The relevance of Watkins' views to contemporary efforts to develop chiropractic clinical science is suggested.

Claude O. Watkins is an enigma. Although he held high positions in the National Chiropractic Association (NCA) and later the Amerian Chiropractic Association (ACA), he has been forgotten by all but a few in the profession today. A very private person, he was at the same time a friend of statesmen, an active participant in his local community and in his state and national professional associations, an author, editor and publisher. Most importantly, he was a visionary teacher and philosopher of the science of chiropractic with few rivals for excellence since the Founder.

Claude O. Watkins was born of immigrant farmers in Eagle Grove, Iowa. His father, Lewis A. Watkins (1848-1911) arrived in America from Wales in 1869. Dr. Watkins' exact date of birth is uncertain (September 9, 1901 or 1902).[1] The family moved to North Dakota shortly thereafter, and Claude was raised mainly by his older sister Lillie, owing to his mother's poor health. After graduation from high school he worked at several factories in Wisconsin before moving to Davenport to study at the Palmer School of Chiropractic (PSC). He paid his way through the three year curriculum by working at a Davenport hotel. His diploma from PSC is dated May 13, 1925.

Watkins was issued Montana chiropractic license #126 at Lewistown on August 14, 1926. He began his 51 year practice in Sidney, Montana shortly thereafter. He soon met Helen Gertrude Hunt, a University of Minnesota graduate and school teacher in Sidney. The couple was married in 1927, and their first son, Robert, now an editor for the University of Washington, was born in 1929. A second son, John, who later earned a doctorate in education from Northern Arizona State University and now teaches at Ferris State College in Michigan, was born in 1937.

Montana in the 1920s and 1930s was still a frontier. The Homestead Act had opened the state to settlement only 25 years before. Sidney may have been unusual during this period for having Dr. Watkins, several M.D.'s and two dentists to serve its health care needs. Relationships between Watkins and the local allopaths are described by Mrs. Watkins[2] as distant, but not openly hostile. It was only in later years, however, that Watkins could make and receive referrals to and from Sidney MDs.

During the early years, the medical needs of his patients were met by referral to his father-in-law, John H. Hunt, M.D., who reportedly[3] had completed a "Physician's Course" in chiropractic at the PSC circa 1915, and who practiced in nearby Glendive. Although Drs. Watkins and Hunt had considered establishing a joint practice, the latter feared reprisals from the AMA on "ethical" grounds, and the combined practice was never attempted. With the exception of a short period during the late 1930s when he was joined by Melvin Klette, D.C., Watkins was a solo practitioner throughout his career.[4]

Watkins' health-science interests were broad, and by any standards he was a "mixer" chiropractor. Apart from the equipment at a local hospital, he owned the only EKG device in Sidney for years. Mrs. Watkins and son Robert recall that he treated tonsilitis with some type of electrical device, and dispensed oral penicillin for infectious diseases in the 1940s. He constructed a "fever box," employed foot vibrators, used a "basal metabolism tester," and maintained a clinical laboratory for pathological studies.[5] The cover of the March 1940 issue of the *National Chiropractic Journal* shows Dr. Watkins at his microscope. The sign on the modest office he built in Sidney proudly indicated "Chiropractic Physician".[6] He was

*Director of Research, Northwestern College of Chiropractic, Bloomington, MN.
Paper delivered at the Seventh Annual Conference on Chiropractic History in Bloomington, MN on June 6, 1987.
Correspondence to NWCC, 2501 West 84th Street, Bloomington, MN 55431.

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an early supporter of the National Chiropractic Association and their broader interpretation of chiropractic.[7]

Watkins was very involved in his community. His memberships included Kiwanis, the Masons, the Shriners, Elks, Moose, a garden club which he started, and a local Toastmaster's Club which he also initiated.[8] He was chairman of his county bond drive during World War II, and later served as an unpaid administrator for a federal housing project in Sidney.[9] He was active in local Democratic party politics, and an outspoken critic of the late Senator Joseph McCarthy and the John Birch movement during the 1950s and 1960s.[10, 11]

Watkins was a keen observer of national and international politics. Senator Mike Mansfield, later ambassador to Japan, was a friend and guest at the Watkins' home,[12] and a written acknowledgment from Franklin Roosevelt's secretary in 1935 is included among Watkins' papers. Ambassador Mansfield recalls the doctor as "a man to whom I turned to often for advice" and "a good personal friend".[13]

Watkins' 1953 self-published essay "The Watkins Plan to Stop Communism", which he formally registered with the Library of Congress, may have led to his invited presentation at the National Education Association convention in 1962 on the nature of the John Birch movement. According to Mrs. Watkins and son Robert,[14] the doctor considered the far right and far left to be very similar, in that both adhered to dogmatic principles. In his perspectives on local, national and global politics Watkins' message seems to have paralleled his recommendations for chiropractic: free societies and free sciences require freedom of speech and of inquiry.

Watkins continued his education throughout his career. One of his earliest papers[15] reflects his regular review of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and the family recalls stacks of *JAMA* issues in his office. Watkins' unpublished 1967 essay, "More about Clinical Research", was distributed to select ACA committees and accredited colleges with an article from the *JAMA* to illustrate the feasibility of practice-based research.[16] In 1932 he voiced his praise for *The Chirogram*, published by Los Angeles College of Chiropractic.[17]

His interest in Pavlov and in Russian medicine are evidenced in several of his writings. Mrs. Watkins recalls that he was frequently away from Sidney for post-graduate seminars.[18] His diplomas include a "Master of Chiropractic" certificate from the Nashville College of Chiropractic (1937), and certificates as a "Physiotherapist" from the NCA National Council on Physiotherapy (in 1949 and 1954). The breadth and depth of his self-education are reflected in his essays.

Watkins' personal commitment to education paralleled his career-long crusade to improve chiropractic academic and scientific activities. Higher standards of training within the colleges and lifelong learning were considered essential to the role of the chiropractic "physician-scientist",[19, 20] and were a recurring theme in his essays. Although he encouraged[21] the improvements in basic science instruction which evolved during the five decades of his career, he was dissatisfied with the efforts of the colleges and professional associations (NCA, ICA, ACA) to prepare D.C.'s for careers in clinical research.[22, 23]

The sources of Watkins' scientific attitudes are uncertain. His 1923-1925 training at the PSC coincided with the neurocalometer debacle,[24] and helped to shape his lifelong aversion to B.J. Palmer's philosophy. Watkins would presumably have come in contact with the founders of the Lincoln College of Chiropractic, who resigned in protest from the PSC faculty over Palmer's dogmatic restrictions on academic freedom.[25] Watkins' close association with his University of Michigan-trained allopathic father-in-law could have been an early and continuing influence. Dr. Hunt died in 1946. Watkins' concern for clinical research in chiropractic is in evidence as early as 1940 in his essay, "The Science and Art and Philosophy of Things Natural—Chiropractic".[26]

Little information is available concerning Watkins' professional activities during the first decade of his practice. The June 1934 issue of the *National Chiropractic Journal* lists him as secretary of the Montana Chiropractic Association, while his article in the September 1934 issue lists him as editor of the *Montana Chirolite*, a publication which was subsequently supported by the state associations of Montana, Idaho and Wyoming. A 1935 article reviewed his lobbying efforts at the state capital.[27] In the final issue of the *Chirolite* in November 1941 editor-publisher Watkins indicated that the journal was then in its twelfth year, which suggests that he may have launched his writing career as early as 1929. The *Chirolite's* successor, the *American Chiropractic Journal*, was published for a brief period by Watkins, but was not financially viable.[28] The *Chirolite* was re-established in 1943, but without Watkins' editorship.

Watkins was apparently the first chairman of the NCA Committee on Education, and presumably helped to set the direction[29] for John J. Nugent's[30] subsequent efforts as the NCA Director of Education. In 1938 Watkins became a member of the NCA Board of Directors, and in 1942-1943 served as chairman of this body. His classic *Basic Principles of Chiropractic Government*, which he self-published in 1944, seems to have been inspired by the doctor's frustration at his inability to convince the NCA to develop a vigorous program of clinical research. Walter B. Wolf, a South Dakota delegate to the NCA, and later chairman of the Accreditation Committee of the Council on Chiropractic Education, recalls that "he made several appearances before the Council on Education to advocate his concern for research. This was back during the days when Dr. John Nugent was director of education for the NCA . . . However, his (Watkins') schedule of events was not popular when compared to so many other details that had to be accomplished".[31]

Watkins subsequently served for several years as president of the Montana Chiropractic Association, and the family recalls that he promoted continuing education at state association meetings.[32] In 1951 he served as chairman of the NCA's Committee on Research, and during 1965-1968 he held the

chair of the Committee on Clinical Research of the newly-formed American Chiropractic Association, and continued his quixotic efforts.

At State conventions, Montana chiropractor C. R. Grow formed his impressions of Watkins' contributions to the profession: "C. O. Watkins was one of the pioneer chiropractors in Montana and served his profession very actively throughout his long career. He was the elected representative to the National Chiropractic Association for a number of years during the 1940s and 1950s until his advancing age made him relinquish the job to a younger person. Although C. O. was a quiet, unassuming type of person, his counsel was often sought in matters that concerned the profession and his opinion was usually rendered in a firm and uncompromising tone that spoke of a lifetime of fighting for the things he believed in. I was told by one of the 'old-timers' that Dr. Watkins spent more time in our State Capital in Helena than the people who were elected to the legislature".[33]

Joseph Janse, President of the National College of Chiropractic, recalled him in a letter to Mrs. Watkins following Watkins' death: "Yes, I knew your husband well. He defined so much good in behalf of the profession. He was a man of honesty and propriety and he lived with staunch strong convictions. We of the profession shall always be indebted to him for helping tailor the progress and security of the profession".[34]

Watkins' philosophy of chiropractic was unambiguous. He rejected all authority for theory and practice methods except that which derived from scientific data, and believed that the responsibility for collecting these data rested, individually and collectively, with chiropractors. In the absence of research data, he argued, the chiropractor was left with two undesirable alternatives: dogmatic adherence to fixed principles of practice, or no authority at all.

Watkins considered that the lack of unity in chiropractic reflected this lack of scientific authority, and was pessimistic about efforts to unite the profession by ignoring theoretical differences among D.C.'s (e.g., the 1963 merger of the NCA and a splinter group from the ICA to form the ACA). The purpose of chiropractic organization, he reasoned, should be to foster clinical studies of the diversity of chiropractic methods and theories. "Natural unity", he predicted, would evolve if chiropractors would come together to study their differences.[35]

Watkins envisioned the chiropractor as a physician-scientist, that is, as a doctor who is skilled in providing and evaluating health-care. Formal courses of orientation to the attitudes and methods of science should be provided to the student doctor, he reasoned, to enable the D.C. to interpret, implement, experimentally test, publish, and criticize the theories and results of chiropractic methods. "Too often", he suggested, "chiropractors do not realize that chiropractic research must be done by clinicians like themselves in their own offices because the first prerequisite for clinical research is being able to observe patients under treatment, and this must be done under normal practice conditions".[36] One associate[37] recalls that: "He firmly believed that clinical research would give chiropractic a scientific basis for acceptance. But his idea of having doctors do research work in their offices was limited in that only a very few are really dedicated to the detailed work involved with research. This, he could not understand. He firmly believed that every doctor of chiropractic could keep the required records."

Watkins acknowledged that many D.C.'s would not be active participants in chiropractic studies, but hoped for greater participation than the 10% of allopaths[38] who engage in clinical investigations: "All should be trained in clinical research," he reasoned, "as no one can tell who might discover a promising hypothesis for testing".[39] Watkins faulted the chiropractic leadership for underestimating "the responsibility and capacity of the chiropractic physician" to engage in substantive clinical research.[40]

"C. O." believed that improvement in the chiropractic clinical arts is the principal reason for clinical research. However, he recognized also that a variety of secondary benefits could result from a vigorous program of clinical investigations by chiropractors. Among these, he predicted, would be greater unity within the profession, greater respect and collaboration with the health science community, and a sounder basis for public relations and legal matters.[41] Increased clinical research, he reasoned, would also attract the attention and collaboration of educators and basic scientists, and would thereby further improve the quality and quantity of scholarly activities in chiropractic.

Watkins' fifty-year journey through chiropractic may have been even lonelier than that of John J. Nugent. Both men struggled against cultism and sought to raise educational standards in the profession: Nugent against opposition to basic science training, and Watkins against indifference to clinical research training. Although Nugent was often publicly vilified and disputed, Watkins' views seem rather to have been ignored. And while Nugent would live to see his dream fulfilled[42] in the 1974 recognition of the Council on Chiropractic Education (CCE) by the U.S. Office of Education, no such satisfaction came to Claude Watkins.

He died in 1977 following a stroke, some six months before the premiere issue of the *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics (JMPT)*, later the first chiropractic science journal to be indexed by the National Library of Medicine. Indeed, not until 1986, some nine years after Watkins' death, would the first controlled adjustive experiment by chiropractors be reported.[43]

In a 1967 letter to Harlin Larson, Watkins described his career-long frustration: "I am in a period of indecision as [to] just what I should do about the struggle I have been carrying on for so many years to put chiropractic on a scientific foundation. I gave it up back in 1945 and took it up again

about 1960 and now I am about to give it up again as a hopeless cause. I have already invested a great deal of my time and money and as one grows older the time is perhaps more important than the money. The past year I have been working with the ACA colleges and officials to point out to them the need of getting rid of cultist principles and [basing] chiropractic on scientific principle and outlining a program by which it could be done. It would be necessay for the colleges to head up such a program, and it would spread from the colleges to the field. Most of the colleges, if not all, favor the plan but do nothing about it. Of course we could start a program of reorientation from cultism to science in the field using my committee on clinical research for the purpose. The big question then would be whether the colleges could make cultists faster than we could reorient them to science. This with other things causes me to wonder if it is all worth the effort."[44]

A sense of desperation is also apparent among his last written efforts to persuade the ACA and its colleges: "No modern profession has had a more turbulent history than chiropractic. Not only has there been a continuous conflict within the profession, but there has been a continuous struggle for public acceptance. Even after seventy years of trying to establish itself, chiropractic faces the question of whether it can survive. Since its sole purpose is the care of the sick, it would seem that full public support would be forthcoming, but it isn't. Why? Why is chiropractic unlike other healing professions in that respect? Why must it struggle to achieve public recognition? What is it doing wrong? Why, when the chips are down, do even its friends desert it? Why has it made no scientific progress as other sciences have? In short, why is chiropractic the queer and rejected child in the field of science, as well as in many other segments of society? These questions demand answers".[45]

Watkins final campaign to implement a physician-scientist model of chiropractic is recalled by Arthur M. Schierholz, former member of the NCA Board of Directors and former executive director of the ACA and secretary-treasurer of the Foundation for Chiropractic Education and Research: "In 1965 or 1966 he came to the ACA headquarters determined to sell the staff on instituting a clinical research program in the membership or in the Colleges. None of the chiropractic colleges were fully accredited at that time so every available dollar that could be acquired was paid out in educational grants-in-aid. At that time the colleges involved in the accreditation movement were struggling and striving in every manner possible to upgrade the curriculum qualitatively. Dr. Watkins was ahead of the profession."[46]

Watkins' continuing influence on chiropractic has been minimal, but not untraceable. Ted L. Shrader, a long-time student of Watkins' philosophy, has been instrumental in the ACA Technique Council's growing awareness[47] of the critical role of clinical research in chiropractic. Shrader has also republished Watkins' *Basic Principles*. Watkins' teachings and recommendations, although ignored by the ACA, did not go unnoticed at his alma mater. Roy W. Hildebrandt, then chairman of Palmer College's Department of Roentgenology and later the founding editor of the *JMPT*, wrote to Watkins in 1968 to express his admiration: "During the past few months I have had an opportunity to read some of your material on chiropractic science and practice. Having been sincerely moved by your work, I must take this opportunity to convey my humble respects. I don't believe I have to tell you the extent of my agreement—I couldn't agree more. During the past 20 years that I have been with chiropractic, I have been unimpressed with the profession's desires to acquire millions of free dollars for pure research into the nature of the mental impulse. I am especially unimpressed because I see the profession sitting idly by waiting for miracles, or worse yet, content in its dogma, ignoring that which would cost so little and do so much for chiropractic—clinical research. I think this work of yours will be an important factor in the change of attitudes which is so important—keep it up."[48]

Watkins' views on the role of clinical science in chiropractic may, in fact, just now be moving to the top of the professions agenda. The "physician-scientist" model proposed by Watkins has only recently reappeared in the chiropractic literature, but is resurfacing in a period which is witnessing a small but growing clinical research literature. Several of the CCE-affiliated colleges have required some clinical research coursework for the doctorate in chiropractic, and the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College has developed a research-oriented clinical residency in collaboration with the University of Saskatchewan.

A few schools have begun to revise philosophy and research course curricula to reflect the philosophy of the science of chiropractic which Watkins advocated. The presidency of the ICA, once held by B. J. Palmer, was recently won on a platform which emphasized research as well as public relations. Some development is apparent in all three of the areas Watkins considered fundamental to chiropractic scientific growth, "Education, orientation, and scientific organization,"[49] and a small amount of research activity can now be discerned, even by chiropractic's critics.[50]

Whether chiropractic scientific development will be able to keep pace with the growing political and economic pressures for rigorous clinical data is still an open question. Lack of research, and particularly the absence of standards of care (clinical outcome data), has encouraged limitations on medicare payments to chiropractors.[51] The American Public Health Associations grudging acknowledgment of the clinical value of chiropractic manipulative care for low back pain explicitly noted that D.C.'s have contributed little to the clinical trial data in manipulation.[52] Meanwhile, non-chiropractic studies are growing rather steadily in fields such as physical therapy and manipulative medicine. As Watkins[53] predicted, chiropractic's research gap has begun to erode chiropractors' claim to be the experts in the science and art of spinal manipulative care.

Dr. Watkins' recommendations for scientific development in chiropractic may no longer be sufficient to meet the scientific needs of the profession, but neither can they any longer be ignored. Watkins' philosophy of the science of chiropractic, long overdue for consideration and implementation, may provide an important means of meeting the profession's scientific responsibilities. This remarkable chiropractor's legacy should not be forgotten.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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'The first leg of a relay toward a scientifically-based profession'

On June 6, 1987 Mrs. Claude Watkins delivered the remarks below after accepting a posthumous honorary degree from Northwestern College during the AHC's Seventh Annual Conference. At right, Mrs. Watkins, flanked by her sons, John and Robert, holds the honorary doctorate. NWCC President Donald Cassata is at left and Dr. Joe Keating, author of the paper on Watkins, (page 11) is at right.

I wish to express the appreciation of my family and myself to Northwestern College of Chiropractic for posthumously conferring the honorary degree of Doctor of Humanities upon my husband, Claude.

I would like to compliment Dr. Keating upon his exhaustive research and expert presentation of Dr. Watkins, the chiropractor and his philosophy. And now I wish to tell you about the Dr. Watkins I knew—my husband, Claude.

You may have wondered why a young boy on a North Dakota farm would choose to become a chiropractor. He so chose because he had seen how much a chiropractor had helped his mother, after she was thrown from a horse and suffered a crippling hip injury. Claude hoped that he could help others as much as that chiropractor had helped his mother.

Claude was a devoted family man—so much so that he begrudged time spent away from his family, unless it was related in some way to his life-long commitment to chiropractic. In fact, we used to tease him about becoming homesick when he had traveled more than ten miles from our home in Sidney, Montana.

But if the trips involved chiropractic, that was something else, and he made many such trips. He frequently traveled to the state capital to promote laws that not only raised the educational standards for licensing, but also required practitioners to obtain additional education to maintain their license. These efforts included numerous appearances before the Montana state legislature on behalf of the proposed changes. There were also many trips to chiropractic conventions, seminars, and sessions of the national executive board on which Claude served for many years. No sacrifice of time from his practice and family was too great if he believed it would benefit chiropractic.

I have mentioned that Claude's commitment to chiropractic was responsible for these trips from home, but perhaps you wonder how he spent his time at home in Sidney. He used it primarily for his writing and his patients, by whom he was highly regarded. It may be of interest to know that his first patient continued to be his patient throughout his fifty years of practice. During his last illness, resulting from a stroke, she frequently called to inquire about him and to express her wish for his recovery.

And there was the time one severe winter when none of the M.D.'s would go out into the country to care for a desperately ill man, because the snow was as high as the fence posts. Even though the tops of the fence posts were the only guide a sleigh driver had to fetch a doctor, Claude accepted the risk involved and went.

Finally, his patients' high regard for Claude was clearly evidenced by a remark made to me after his death by a man who said, "I have not only lost my doctor—I have lost a friend."

I surely do not wish to give you the impression that Claude's life was all work and no play. His life had a social side too. It included golfing, following local high school sports, or playing in a weekly bridge four-some comprising a banker, a butcher, a hardware merchant, and himself for many, many years. He also enjoyed the role of host, and guest, in the social life of our family and community.

Next to his home and his profession, Claude loved politics—not by seeking office, but by discussing the current political situation with others, Democrat or Republican. In fact, a teacher friend frequently stopped in on her way to school for a brief cup of coffee and a few moments of lively political discussion with Claude.

However, except for his family, no other interest could compete with his dedication to chiropractic. He perceived the chiropractic of his day as an adolescent profession. His chief concern was that although the Founder of chiropractic had set forth a sound basis for a new healing profession, its future was being jeopardized by its failure to contribute to knowledge through scientific research, which chiropractic disdained.

Claude envisioned for chiropractic a promising future *only* if its practitioners abandoned their belief that chiropractic had already "arrived." *Only* by being based upon scientific principles could chiropractic mature from adolescence into adulthood and become recognized as a truly great, essential healing profession.

Such were Claude's beliefs even forty years ago. If he were with us *today*, he would rejoice at the commitment of Northwestern College of Chiropractic to a strong research program. I'd like to think that Claude was running the first leg of a relay toward a scientifically-based chiropractic profession and that the leadership of such institutions as Northwestern has accepted the baton Claude has passed—to pass the baton in turn to their graduates. Only in this way will science be victorious over cultism in chiropractic.